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Whose Side is the CIA on?

The Central Intelligence Agency is up to its old tricks again—dirty tricks. The boys in the backrooms seem determined to lower themselves to the Soviet level and adopt tactics that in the past have been reserved for terrorists and tyrants. CIA operatives are fomenting world terrorism, which we profess to abhor; they are spreading “disinformation” when the truth would be a far more powerful weapon.

I cannot think of an instance in the last 20 years when a covert CIA operation enhanced our security without damaging our credibility as the world’s leading spokesman for freedom and democracy. More likely, the CIA’s clandestine stunts embarrassed our country, held us up to global ridicule, played into the hands of our adversaries or invited retaliation in kind.

Consider the litany of CIA fiascoes—the attempt to invade Cuba with a ragtag refugee force that was easily defeated at the Bay of Pigs; the plot to dose up Fidel Castro so his beard would fall out; the contract with the Mafia to have him knocked off; the scheme to smuggle poisoned toothpaste into Africa to kill left-wing leader Patrice Lumumba; the clandestine military operations in Laos and Iraq, which backfired and ended in the slaughter of mountain tribesmen abandoned by the CIA; the agent who plugged in a lie detector and blew out all the lights in a Singapore hotel; and the bizarre scheme to try to contact dead Soviet agents by seance on the assumption that, since dead, these agents would recognize the errors of their ways and spill their secrets.

These abuses and absurdities finally brought a congressional clampdown on the CIA. No more reckless engineering of coups in other lands, the agency was told, and no more attempts to foment revolutions and to assassinate foreign leaders. But now a conservative backwash threatens to “unleash” the agency again—a salivating prospect for the “old boy” operatives whose arrested maturation and glandular imaginations were precisely what made “covert” a

administration offer much hope that it will resist the pressure to unshackle the CIA. Too many in this administration seem oblivious to the menace that poverty, hunger, racism, religious fanaticism and right-wing oppression pose to global stability and, ultimately, to our own security. Instead, they seem obsessed with the notion that the Kremlin, Castro and Qaddafi are the only threats—and ergo, that any enemy of theirs is a friend of ours.

On the basis of top-secret documents I have examined and confidential information I have received from CIA contacts, I can report to you today that the CIA is preparing to join forces with totalitarian regimes and anti-communist factions to carry out covert operations around the world—operations as bizarre and potentially as counterproductive as those that disgraced the agency and our country in the Sixties and Seventies.

Bill Casey, the doddering director of the CIA, thinks he’s found a way to get around restrictions on covert operations abroad and a way to circumvent the law which forbids the CIA from operating in our own country. Casey thinks he can get foreign agents to do the dirty work, with our support.

He argues that the dismantling of U.S. covert capabilities has left Pres-

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ident Reagan “with no reasonable option other than increased cooperation with anti-communist forces abroad.” A top-secret planning document recommends that “consideration be given to improving the capability of the agency to rapidly escalate aid to anti-communist forces.”

That could put our country, the

RAISING HELL!

BY JACK ANDERSON

and traditions than a loathing of communism. It could also leave us with a wide open window of vulnerability.

Libya and Cuba are priority targets, of course, for any new round of covert activities inspired by the CIA. Within the protected corridors of CIA headquarters in McLean, Va., there is whispered speculation about bizarre schemes to do away with Qaddafi. A hit man could pose as one of the Libyan ruler’s team of international mercenaries and slip him a delayed-effect poison, for example. There would be no symptoms for the first 48 hours, enough time for the assassin to exit the country. Qaddafi would then come down with symptoms indistinguishable from certain viral diseases; he would become paralyzed, slip into a coma and expire—without a trace of the poison left in his body.

The CIA got the idea for this poison from the Rumanian secret service, which used it to dispose of some dissidents who had been given asylum in western nations. The assassins were never caught. I have seen the formula for the poison, which could be mixed in many chemical labs; but journalistic responsibility forbids me from publishing details.

The CIA considered using a tiny dart, made up to resemble one of the black